

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE FISCAL YEAR 2003

Summary FY2003

The Information Resources Management Board (IRMB) spent much of first half of FY2003 devising new specification for Rhode Island's Chief Information Officer (CIO) and lobbying to have that critical position filled. The Board's recommendations formed a substantial portion of the position description under which a new current CIO was recruited. In the second half of the year, with the advent of Governor Carcieri's Fiscal Fitness Program, an IT Team began a substantial review of IT statewide, and the Board began work on determining how it will fit in with that review and the planning processes that will result. Throughout the year, the Board's other major activity has been oversight of the continued development of *RI.gov*, the state's award winning World Wide Web portal.

Overview

The IRMB was established in law (RIGL 29-8) during the 1996 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly, and conducted its first meeting in June 1997. The first year of its operation was primarily organizational and direction-setting, with the first five-year plan, required by the law, adopted in 1998.

In its second and third years (1998-2000) the IRMB focused on assuring that the Y2K problem was resolved without undue disruption of state and local government services. With the successful resolution of the Y2K problem, due largely to the dedicated staff, in the second half of 2000, the IRMB was able to turn its focus to planning for electronic information services and interactive government transactions that were becoming much more common in state governments. Rhode Island needed to join other states in providing electronic online, real-time access to its government services.

Emphasis during the fourth and fifth years (2000-2001) was principally on beginning to meet the state's needs relating to e-government, including the development of policy direction for security, privacy, and confidentiality of individual records. Equally important was the introduction of the self-funding e-government model that led to a shared risk partnership contract with New England Interactive, Inc. and the state's portal, *RI.gov*.

In FY2002 the *RI.gov* bloomed with new services, a fresh new look and feel and templates to make it easy for agencies to design websites that fit into a state website pattern. The state's effort to create an integrated financial system RI-SAIL went live with purchasing and accounts payable modules in every agency and a website for ad hoc data requests and regular reporting. Much of IRMB's activity was put on hold, however, in

December 2001 when Barbara Weaver, after five years as CIO, retired. The position was not subsequently filled, and OLIS went without leadership until February 2003 when Assistant Director Howard Boksenbaum was named acting CIO.

Much of the IRMB's time in FY2003 was consumed in creating a new job description for the CIO and in lobbying to have that position filled. Meanwhile, the need to provide for cybersecurity overshadowed much of IT activity in Rhode Island in FY2003, as is did in many states. The Office of the CIO became an active participant in the Governor's Advisory Council on Emergency Preparedness through membership in that Council's Domestic Preparedness Subcommittee; the Assistant Director chairs its Communications Working Group. The focus on security also prompted participation in the NASCIO ISAC (Information Sharing and Analysis Center) and the Multi-state ISAC organized by New York State's Office of Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure Coordination. In addition, a Rhode Island state government ISAC mailing list was begun as a first step toward enhanced levels of sharing and analysis of cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection information within Rhode Island.

Although Rhode Island continues its slow but steady progress into the information age, much more needs to be done. We must strive toward a scenario, in which the state invests in the infrastructure of state government, including the human infrastructure, in order to take advantage of economies that can result from use of modern technology. These economies can permit state government to offer better quality and quantity of services to its taxpayers. We need to develop a technological architecture for the state that aligns technology with the state's business practices and is a priority for the administration and the legislature. Moreover, we need to recognize that the state must create a technology environment that is attractive to potential employers and to citizens of this state.

Because the Carcieri Administration has brought a new appreciation of the power of IT to Rhode Island state government, that scenario is likely to bloom. An acting CIO was appointed in February, and a new State CIO was hired at the end of the fiscal year. The Administration's Fiscal Fitness Program, including a comprehensive review of IT activity statewide, has begun. OLIS is proud to have provided two staff members to support that effort. Through the Fiscal Fitness Program's analysis, further economies will be brought to light through evaluation of business practices and their alignment with IT. The result will undoubtedly be a more effective utilization of technology throughout the state, and might well include a radical redirection of technology to serve the interest of all of state government and its many constituencies.

Highlights of FY 2003

RI.gov

The State's World Wide Web Portal, *RI.gov*, has been a bright spot in Rhode Island government's information resources management development. Not only has it met success in and of itself, but it has also modeled an architecture for the future; a self-supporting model organized with a central commitment to infrastructure but developed with independent agency-specific content. Central governance by the IRMB and the CIO is bolstered by strong agency participation. The portal is developed and maintained as a risk sharing

zero dollar contract with New England Interactive, Inc., a subsidiary of National Information Consortium, which operates similar portals in 18 states. The IRMB is responsible for overseeing portal development and approving both priority implementation of various functions and any fees to be charged to users of those functions. In November 2001 the portal became a reality and began providing access and services to the Rhode Island community. Drivers' Records sales to insurance companies was the first service to be brought online, and continues to provide the revenue that supports the portal and its development. The portal provides easy access to other key state government web sites and services, such as online boat registrations renewals, unemployment insurance claims and health license verification.

During FY2003, the portal added personalization features, refined a special service for times of declared state emergency, and added services including payment of business taxes online, ISDS sewer permit searching, boat registration renewal and an ask-the-librarian service, utilizing the resources of OLIS' Library Services Program and the Providence Public Library. The portal now also supplies agency webmakers with templates and navigation and development tools, including calendar and press release tools. The work of the portal is on hold as the fiscal year ends while the Governor's IT Task Force and the Fiscal Fitness IT team reevaluate the management of the contract. In the pipeline are new services from the Division of Motor Vehicles, Division of Taxation, and the Departments of Environmental Management, Health, Education, Labor and Training and Business Regulation.

RI-SAIL

The **Rhode Island Statewide Automated Information Link** (RI-SAIL) is intended to become a single, comprehensive integrated financial and human resources management system for all of Rhode Island State Government. RI-SAIL currently includes general ledger, accounts payable, purchasing, payroll, accounts receivable and a special website for financial reports and queries. RI-SAIL will, moreover, either serve to facilitate the operation of or interface seamlessly with related agency-specific systems. These services utilize a variety of software packages and tools, and are not entirely integrated. This vital IT project is managed by a Management Committee led by Project Director who is also the State Controller.

After six years of development and one year of operation, RI-SAIL is thus stalled at an awkward stage. RI-SAIL's management team is exploring options in moving forward with the minimal resources at hand.

Telecommunications

In mid-March, Telecommunications Director Jeanne Spinosa left state service to head Johnson and Wales University's Telecommunications services. Upon her departure, OLIS combined voice and data communications into a single unit and named Walter Casper acting director. OLIS continues to be actively involved in the OSHEAN Collaborative, especially the development of that organization's Beacon Project, which promises to bring the state and the state's academic and educational institutions increased Internet access, including Internet II, at a reduced cost. OLIS also represents the state at RINET, the nonprofit organization that supplies the K-12 community with Internet, data voice and video connectivity and expertise.

A major communications effort in FY2003 was the challenge of organizing a Communications Working Group (CWG) for the Governors' Council on Emergency Management Subcommittee on Domestic Preparedness. That Group includes representation from the State's Emergency Management Agency, Rhode Island National Guard, State Police and Departments of Health, Environmental Management, Corrections and Transportation. To date, the CWG has accomplished an inventory of data connectivity among potential emergency responders and has begun a project to supply first responder dispatch agencies throughout the state with radios. A study of radio needs including a recommended implementation plan for a statewide interoperable radio network has also begun. A similar study of data communications is in the planning stages.

Policy Development

Through its Policy Committee the IRMB has reviewed policies regarding access to information and the security and privacy of information available online. It was decided for the time being not to implement broad policy regarding the control of the removal of information on the web but to leave the determination of web content under the control of the individual departments. Other policies are available on the IRMB Web site, www.irmb.state.ri.us.

Information Technology Operations Center

The state computer center in Johnston badly needs attention both in its layout and in its purpose and overall functions. Over the years the operations in Johnston have expanded, while the space that the computer equipment requires has been neglected. The central mailing operations have expanded dramatically as implementation of centralization has been accomplished department by department. Meanwhile, the physical facility has had little or no attention. The building is not handicapped accessible, nor is it arranged for good workflow. Of even more concern, the emergency and backup facilities to insure the continuous operation of the center are outmoded or non-existent. As the state becomes more dependent on online systems and 24-hour operation, the lack of appropriate backup systems represents a critical flaw in the information technology infrastructure. This problem requires immediate attention if the state is to avoid a debilitating and embarrassing failure of critical information systems.

During FY 2001, the firm of Newport Collaborative Architects was engaged to do a feasibility study of the existing computer center to determine whether the functions should remain in the existing building or be transferred to another location to be determined. The report resulting from this study strongly recommended that the state continue to conduct its computer operations at this site but that significant work would be needed to improve workflow, make the facility handicapped accessible and rearrange equipment and staff to provide a true twenty-first century Information Technology Operations Center. Again, the FY 2004 budget proposed by Governor Carcieri includes some funding to begin the process of modifying the building to accommodate this goal; however, a great deal more funding is required, and it will be required sooner than later.

Staff Development

The state's long-term hiring restrictions (currently a freeze) and downward pressure on agency budgets has led to a significant reduction of IT staff headcount statewide. Fortunately, staff that remain are extremely dedicated and talented. Because the State is not hiring and not training due to curtailed training budgets, the

skills within the staff resides in old technologies. We need, and are not successfully acquiring, WWW-related skills as well as skills in XML, Java, ASP, and Data Base Administration.

OLIS' IT program currently has nearly twenty fewer staff than it had five years ago. These vacancies severely limit the capacity of the state to provide itself with:

End User Support. Many agencies (including OLIS) currently fill in with contractors, and there is no help desk statewide for WAN, LAN, desktops, and no help desk at all in OLIS.

System Analysis/Development. The state is now making heavy use of outsourcing with little effective project management. This has resulted in slow progress on automation of business processes, e.g., professional licensing and permitting, which has resulted in the retardation of "back-end" systems that *RI.gov* could web enable.

Staff Retention Imbalance. This depopulates OLIS more rapidly than the agencies. This means less central manpower and skill, therefore, less central influence leading to weak standards, little help for IT and frustration with central computing from the less skilled agencies. "...I would rather have OLIS do this (maintain network, develop a new system, provide technical support, etc.), but I know you can't get the positions filled, keep your staff trained or facilitate procurement in a timely fashion..." is the sort of thing agency directors say about OLIS all too frequently and too correctly.

Retirement Planning. Retirement could take up to 40 percent of the existing central IT staff in the next five years (higher in some agencies), while hiring restrictions have been leaving positions that could be effecting a transition vacant. If not fixed prior to planned retirements, it will be fixed afterwards but not nearly as well.

Planning, Research and Development

Perhaps the most painful missing capacity in state IT management is the shortage of resources for planning and development. Without staff to support OLIS, the state has been unable to take advantage of opportunities and tools such as NASCIO's architecture development program or the offerings of the State Information Technology Consortium.

In the current constrained environment the State has not been able to take full advantage of the advent of new technologies, especially WWW technologies and XML, Java, and ASP. Also, developments in database management software and techniques, operating system developments, e.g., unification of mainframe programs under OS390, require time and personnel for research and planning that is not currently taking place. This lack of planning is placing Rhode Island at a disadvantage when compared to its sister states, and needs to be quickly addressed if we are to remain among the better users of information technology.

Finally, there are procurement opportunities that are not being caught and exercised—no one is watching the market(s) to examine, for example, Oracle or Microsoft enterprise licenses versus single departmental or individual purchases at retail prices. With the many budget reductions that have been mandated, we have lost

the basic tools like subscription to key trade analysis newsletters, conference attendance, and membership in key government IT organizations like NASCIO, NASTD, RITEC, etc. It is important to get these important elements of administering the State's IT function back into operation and funded.

Five-Year Plan

At the April 2001 meeting of the Board, the IRMB voted to adopt six goal areas as follows:

Goal 1: Implement Statewide Financial Management System (RI-SAIL).

Goal 2: Build a statewide infrastructure for state agencies and residents.

Goal 3: Develop and implement a policy framework for security, privacy and confidentiality.

Goal 4: Assure convenient public access to government information and services.

Goal 5: Consolidate and coordinate all telecommunications functions in state government, including voice, data and video.

Goal 6: Safeguard current level of essential state government services.

The Board also instructed the CIO to develop a specific list of activities, together with benchmarks and evaluation criteria, for each of the goal areas for each of the five years. These were prepared and distributed to the IRMB members in preparation for the June 2001 meeting of the Board; however, the June meeting was cancelled, so approval of the detailed plan occurred at the July 2001 meeting. The entire plan is available on the IRMB Web site, www.irmb.state.ri.us.

As a part of changes in the process for creating and modifying the Five-Year Plan, IRMB has put in place a planning committee to review and revise the plan on an ongoing basis. Part of the assumptions proposed for guiding the Planning Committee change the focus of the IRMB planning efforts from tasks to strategy. Under this direction the goals of the IRMB Five-Year Plan would have likely been:

Goal 1: Develop a concept that envisions the delivery of state government information and services in 2005.

Goal 2: Identify opportunities for consolidation and cooperation within agencies that will improve service delivery and reduce costs.

Goal 3: Identify key infrastructure failure potentials that will prevent the delivery of services.

Goal 4: Assess the impact of the retirement of personnel with institutional and skills-based knowledge on the State's ability to deliver services.

The work of the planning committee, along with much of the IRMB's work, was put on hold with the absence of a CIO upon the retirement of Barbara Weaver. With the arrival of a new CIO, the planning

committee needs to be revitalized so that it can work with the governor's Fiscal Fitness Program to review the above proposals and determine what actions would support these goals and facilitate the conversion of the IRMB role from project oversight to strategic planning.

Major Problem Areas

The current technological infrastructure is woefully inadequate and cannot support the anticipated services demanded by the electorate and to support the career service state employees responsible for these services. Private sector e-commerce experience suggests that government agencies will have to change the way they do business to make e-government work. However, for some public sector organizations the focus of e-government is on the technology used rather than the services offered. E-government is not about technology—it is about providing better services more efficiently. The road to better services may not be through technology alone.

The development of effective systems requires a level of cooperation and coordination rarely found in government. Even within departments, conflicting technology platforms and processes persist. If e-government is to be more than moderately useful, agencies across government will have to work together to define common interests and goals. When working across agencies, change is difficult to achieve—especially with frequent shifts in agency management. Successful e-government will require strong and consistent centralized leadership, with clear authority and active support of all branches of government. Otherwise, natural pride of authorship and the limited scope of existing agency initiatives will stifle innovation and undercut the broader goals of e-government.

Budget constraints are present major problems. With the many pressures on discretionary spending, it is difficult to free up the significant investment needed to make e-government work. To successfully implement e-government services, substantial spending is needed initially to develop and implement comprehensive and effective approaches. Long term, this spending should result in significant ongoing savings, but short-term investments will be required of magnitudes not currently in budgets. This needs to be a part of an integrated plan with a broad commitment from both the administration and the legislature.

Erosion of the quality and quantity of central IT staff to support the State's information needs and provide technical and planning services to the Departments is another major problem for the State information technology infrastructure to deal with. This problem is being exacerbated through the inability to replace attrition because of the hiring freeze, stagnation of skills for lack of training funds and a dearth of projects to maintain staff interest and skills.

IRMB Meetings

The IRMB met a total of nine times during this fiscal year. Most of the meetings revolved around discussions and policies that dealt with issues of developing and implementing the statewide portal. The Board also reviewed and made recommendations regarding various departmental projects. While the enabling legislation states that the Board should have oversight of recommendations concerning the information

technology budget proposals, it has been difficult to influence the existing bureaucratic process. More needs to be done to give the State CIO a greater role in departmental IT decisions.

Conclusion

Although much of this report gloomily reiterates last year's report of the sorry state of Rhode Island's IT situation, this year has brought a new source of enthusiasm about the state's technological future. The Carcieri Administration has brought a new perspective not only to the state's IT, but to state government's business processes overall. The Fiscal Fitness Program holds out the prospect of reengineering the way the state does business in search of increased efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, within that program exists a general recognition that the management of information resources must be a major element of any such reengineering. That program consequently engenders the hope that many of the IRMB's concerns may be addressed seriously and that the state's ability to manage its information resources may improve.

Next Steps

The advent of a new Chief Information Officer and the Governor's creation of the Fiscal Fitness Program create new opportunities for the Information Resources Management Board. During the coming year, the Board will exercise those opportunities and seek activity in the following areas:

RI-SAIL

RI-SAIL needs a fresh perspective from someone who has not been part of its history. The Board will work with The Fiscal Fitness IT Team and the CIO to review the governance, structure and technology of RI-SAIL and present recommendations for its future to the Board's September meeting.

Information Technology Operations Center

Although the April 2001 consultant's report recommended building on to and renovating the existing ITOC, much has changed since that report. New potential facilities have emerged within the stock of state-owned properties, and the market has changed sufficiently to warrant a look at out-sourcing. The CIO and Mark Treat of the Fiscal Fitness Program's IT Team, along with Ken Trudel of Citizen's Bank, have taken the lead in investigating the alternatives. The Board will work with them to ensure that the best solution is discovered and acted upon. A presentation is due the Director of Administration in August, followed by inclusion of appropriate funding in the FY2005 budget.

RI.gov

While acknowledging that the current contract with *RI.gov* was appropriate when it was developed, the Board and the CIO see that there is a need to establish tighter management parameters to ensure that the state gets full value for the income realized through the portal's online transactions. Bill Wray of the Board and Beverly Najarian of the Fiscal Fitness Team have been working with the portal vendor, NEI, Inc., to make the necessary alterations in the agreement. When they have completed negotiations in July of this year, the Board

will follow up with appropriate changes in governance and procedures to ensure that the new methodologies inhere on an ongoing basis.

Division of Motor Vehicles

The fiscal fitness program chose the Division of Motor Vehicles as its first subject of analysis. As that analysis has proceeded, a number of recommendations of interest to the IRMB have emerged. The low level of employment of technology at the DMV is a critical feature of its inefficiency. Brian Peterson of the Fiscal Fitness Program's DMV team will work with Joe Mooney, OLIS Information Processing Officer, and Marya Latham, Programmer/Analyst Manager at OLIS, as well as with staff of DMV to plan short-term immediate improvements in DMV's technical infrastructure and use of technology to support business needs. He will report to the Board in August of progress to date, and plans for longer term improvements.

Planning

Finally, the role of the Board itself needs revisiting. The Board will conduct a planning session in October, inviting the IT task Force, the Fiscal Fitness Program's IT team, relevant OLIS staff, and others with experience and expertise to brainstorm, review vision and mission statements for the Board, and develop a series of responsibilities. The planning session will report out specific tasks with assignment of responsibility for each task as well as a plan for how each task will be accomplished and a timeline.